

Mayor's Report

Tuesday, December 16, 2014

Deborah G. Owens

On Dec. 2, 2014, Vice Mayor Gray and I met with La June Montgomery Tabron, president and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Megan Russell Johnson, the foundation's program officer. The purpose of the meeting was to visit with Ms. Tabron, offering the assistance and involvement of the City of Battle Creek as the collaborative economic development plan continues to evolve through BC Vision.

Ms. Tabron, an incredible leader of the Foundation, sees herself and the Foundation not only as a philanthropic organization but as a strong corporate citizen. She emphasized the importance of this economic development effort as one driven by the community. It is truly believed and authenticated that to be a City of prosperity we must have meaningful engagement, inclusive of all who reside and work in the community. We both agreed that to have this prosperity and transformation that we must address the areas of jobs and development of talent and vitality in an equitable manner that advances racial and social equity in Battle Creek.

City Manager Fleury and I met with Ben Damerow and George Erickcek of the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research and the Calhoun County Workforce Development Board. The Institute researches the causes and effects of unemployment and studies and investigates the feasibility and methods of insuring against unemployment, in addition to devising ways and means of preventing and alleviating the distress and hardship caused by unemployment. The Calhoun County Workforce Development Board is made up of 28 members represented as follows:

40% - Kalamazoo County

25% - Calhoun County

15% - Branch County

15% - St. Joseph County

Mr. Damerow is Director of the Employment Management Services Division (EMSD) of the Upjohn Institute and manages employment and training services under the Michigan Works! umbrella. We discussed the issues around manufacturing jobs and the current difficulties in filling many of those positions. Steps continue in our

community through the colleges and Regional Manufacturing Technology Center to train and fill many of those positions. Perceptions tend to chill some from manufacturing jobs, which we know today are very different in their scope. There is also a belief that these jobs are minimally compensated, which no longer holds true. Other areas of concern that also are being addressed are transportation and child care. Communications will be ongoing with Mr. Damerow and Mr. Erickcek as to the successes in the area of workforce development.

A conference call was held with Dr. Ann Kalayil from the U.S. General Services Administration to update the City on current federal leases in Battle Creek, as well as community involvement at the Hart-Dole-Inouye Federal Center. Discussions centered around the many community involvements of the center as well as their “Computers for Learning Program,” in which federal government personal property is donated to schools and educational nonprofit organizations. Additionally, considerable surplus property can be obtained through the State Agencies for Surplus Property (SASP). These programs have been in existence with the City for a number of years and certainly have provided valuable equipment in areas where it is most needed.

The City and Battle Creek Unlimited hosted Consul General Dr. Kazuyuki Katayama of Japan during his day-long visit to Battle Creek. Consul General Dr. Katayama covers the relations with Michigan and Ohio. The role of the Japanese Consul General is to protect the interests of the Japanese citizens and to strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance through furthering relations with local governments, companies, educational institutions, cultural organizations and the general public. This is accomplished by:

- Providing protection and consular services for Japanese nationals
- Promoting trade and investment with Japan
- Promoting cultural, educational and grassroots programs with and about Japan

The day included tours of the Industrial Park, along with visiting a few Japanese industries (DENSO Manufacturing Michigan Inc., and TRMI, Inc.), luncheon with City and BCU representatives, tour of City Hall and concluded with an evening dinner before Dr. Katayama’s return to Detroit.

Saturday, Dec. 13, 2014, the Air National Guard Base at W.K. Kellogg Regional Airport held its awards ceremony, where it also officially changed its name from the 110th Airlift Wing to the 110th Attack Wing. Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and Base Commander Col. Ronald Wilson recapped the past 10 years. Both cited the missions with Remotely Piloted Aircraft, as well as cyber-security and possible installation of a missile defense system as reasons to be optimistic. Col. Wilson was proud to list changes at the base, including college classes that will begin in January by Western Michigan University, Central Michigan University and Kellogg Community College.

The City Commission at its Dec. 2, 2014 meeting approved Brownfield Plan Amendment, Site No. 13, for ReConserve of Michigan, Inc. This amendment allows the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to reimburse ReConserve for the costs of eligible environmental and non-environmental activities needed to redevelop four tax parcels on Angell Street into an animal feed ingredient processing operation, parking and equipment storage areas. As we work to remove blight in our City, this project will result in the rehabilitation of a seriously blighted and underutilized property, provide and create employment and increase the taxable value of the property. A WIN-WIN for Battle Creek!

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah G. Owens, Mayor